

The Honorable Tim Bishop
Statement on Bishop (NY) amendment to H.R. 5441
Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act for FY 2007
June 6, 2006

Mr. Chairman, my amendment would prohibit funding in this bill from being used by the Department of Homeland Security to reimburse a private corporation for attorneys fees and any other legal expenses incurred during their appeal of a recent and impartial National Labor Relations Board decision to reinstate employees who were unfairly fired from their jobs at the Plum Island Animal Disease Center, which is a DHS facility located off the north fork of my district on Long Island.

The Plum Island employees were hard-working members of the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 30. They were loyal to DHS and the research facility on Plum Island.

But in 2002, they were fired on grounds that the NRLB recently found were unjustified. Adding insult to injury, the employees were also denied back pay and benefits for over three years of missed work. And now their employer wants to appeal the administrative decision of an impartial arbiter to put them back to work and award them the back pay and benefits they are due.

I hope that my colleagues would agree that spending money in this bill to reimburse a privately owned joint venture for attorneys fees and to further extend this already long and protracted litigation is an entirely inappropriate use of DHS funds. More important, it would negate their intended use as appropriated by this Congress and detract from what should be the primary focus of the Department -- defending our homeland and keeping Americans safe from foreign sources of terrorism.

For instance, the funds my amendment blocks would be a lot better spent protecting the two cities attacked on September 11th that are now short-changed \$114 million due to the Department's decision to slash anti-terrorism funds from major urban areas.

Mr. Chairman, it's long past time for this case to be resolved, to stop harassing the Plum Island employees, allow them to return to their jobs, and restore their benefits. I urge my colleagues to support this amendment and yield back the balance of my time.